

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHYD #0504 1130825  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 230825Z APR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7620  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1589  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1833  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS YAOUNDE 000504

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/C  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA ACTION OFFICERS  
EUCOM FOR J5-A AFRICA DIVISION AND POLAD YATES

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CM](#)  
SUBJECT: CAMEROON: ELECTIONS CALLED FOR JULY 22

REF: YAOUNDE 445

¶1. (U) As was widely expected, President Biya issued a decree April 20 calling legislative and municipal elections for Sunday, July 22. In accordance with Cameroonian law, voter registration closed with this announcement. According to news reports, some 4 million people are registered to vote, representing 20-25 percent of the population, and well below the government's goal of 7-8 million registered voters.

¶2. (U) Though the announcement was not a surprise (reftel), there was some frustration and disbelief at the decision not to postpone elections until the fall. As one political activist noted, in addition to the poor voter registration results, late July is full rainy season for many parts of the country, meaning some villages will be all but cut off because of impassable roads, making voting difficult if not impossible for many rural residents. In a country already suspicious of the government's motives, this combination of factors will lead some to conclude that the government's actions were deliberately taken to suppress voter participation.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. Donor community efforts will now shift from encouraging people to register to encouraging people to vote. From the beginning, the GRC has indicated its preference to hold the elections in summer to coincide with the expiration of the national assembly members' mandates, rather than to postpone them until fall. Biya called elections for the latest possible date given the expiration of the existing mandates, thus, in theory, allowing maximum time for registration. Still, given the late start to registration and the excessive difficulties would-be voters faced trying to register, Biya's decision might draw a fair amount of criticism, especially as the GRC fell so short of its own goal of 7-8 million registered voters. At the very least, the low registration number is likely to increase apathy among an electorate that believes it has very little chance of effecting change anyway. End Comment.  
NELSON